

PROGRESS REPORT



DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION ACTIVITIES

(As of January 2021)

As the Commonwealth's lead natural resource conservation agency, the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) understands well its responsibility to ensure a sustainable future for equitable recreational access and healthy environments for all Virginians to enjoy. While 2021 may be the first year that the agency has explicitly stated its goals via our Strategic DEI Plan, since 2018 DCR has been working towards advancing our mission through DEI efforts--taking a number of intentional actions and steps to foster an inclusive and equitable environment both inside and outside of the organization.

Those actions taken over these past two years highlight a number of milestones and successes to be marked. To that end, this progress report outlines just some of our specific accomplishments so far that we celebrate as we look ahead to where our efforts will take us moving forward.

ASSESSED EFFORTS AGAINST GLOBAL BENCHMARKS

In 2020, the Department of Conservation and Recreation changed its Diversity, Equity and Inclusion platform to more closely align with global DEI measurement standards for organizations around the world (using the GDIB - Global Diversity & Inclusion Benchmarks). This included enhancing the DEI Committee and creating a more robust subcommittee structure that focuses not only on the organization internally but also expands DCR's review of its partnerships, programs, and services in relation to equitable accessibility to all communities. DCR's focus is to intentionally weave DEI initiatives into the fabric of the agency.



ENHANCED DEI COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

- Distributed five weekly emails explaining different topics of DCR's DEI strategy and structure for 2020 - 2021
- Shared video including Sr. Leadership Team announcing DCR's DEI philosophy
- Listed DEI activities and progress on all Leadership Team meeting agendas
- Implemented Annual Employee Diversity Equity and Inclusion Award

REFORMED DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

- Added in Equity to the D&I framework and reformed overall committee to be co-chaired by two Deputy Directors--segmenting and refocusing both internal to the agency and external to the agency efforts
- Created DEI Committee Charter Document
- Created 2020 - 2021 DCR DEI Goals and Plans Document
- Created 2020 - 2021 DCR DEI Strategic Plan

SUBCOMMITTEE TASK ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ATTRACTION AND RECRUITMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

- Created recruitment resources and HR tools to reach diverse communities based on position and includes:
 - Diverse civic, professional, and natural resource organizations;
 - Service organizations;
 - Minority fraternity & sorority organizations;
 - Historically minority and gender-based colleges and universities; and
 - Participation in community events
- Strategized annual career fair participation plan to be more targeted based on positions being recruited. Ensured participation in fairs and other activities to attract the next generation of workers to natural resource careers
- Continued V3 certification and worked with the Veterans Transition Assistance Program to implement the Virginia Veterans – Hire Vets Now Fellowship Program in DCR
- Identified by discipline the pipelines for how and when new hires can enter the DCR system—focusing on defining experience levels (entry, experienced) for positions as well actual entry points; coordination with the Pipeline Subcommittee is ongoing

EDUCATION AND TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE

- Created Annual Education & Training Plan
- Partnered with the Virginia Centers for Inclusive Communities to offer training
- Implemented survey feedback for all trainings, educational emails, and monthly observances emails
 - **Education** - Agency-wide monthly DEI Awareness emails have been, and will continue to be, shared highlighting topics such as bias, blind spots, systemic racism, microaggressions, privilege, and more.
 - **Training** - Cycles of Prejudice awareness training for all DCR staff (8 statewide webinars); creating an Upstander Culture training for all DCR staff (8 statewide webinars); 30 facilitated follow up discussion sessions conducted with trained DCR facilitators

INCLUSION AND RETENTION SUBCOMMITTEE

- Implemented DEI skills (Inclusion, Communication and Service) as 25% of employee job descriptions (Employee Work Profile) upon which employees are evaluated
- Created follow-up Employee Engagement survey (last done 2018 – to be analyzed for trend changes with workforce over 3 years)
- Created and implemented Cultural Agency-wide Communications Monthly Observances Annual Plan, which included information on dates and topics such as Juneteenth, Recognition of Gay Pride Month, Disability awareness, Black History Month, and Black Hikers Week (promoted on Facebook and Instagram)
- Utilized agency internal website (SharePoint) as repository for all DEI resources, communications and training/education materials for employees to access
- Development of an Employee Value Proposition is underway

SUBCOMMITTEE TASK ACCOMPLISHMENTS *(cont'd)*

PARTNERSHIPS AND PIPELINES SUBCOMMITTEE

- Created “Partnership Lists” by Division to expand scope of agency partnerships and reach communities and populations not specifically targeted or served before (e.g., youth, elderly, those with disabilities, and marginalized or underrepresented communities). A few examples of the many partnerships and pipeline opportunities being pursued:
 - **Jan 2021:** Submitted grant proposal to the Virginia Outdoor Foundation; the aim is to enhance equitable access of state park lands to city residents in partnership with Richmond City Parks
 - **Oct 2020:** Partnering with Senator Stuart on a restorative justice project where headstones from Columbian Harmony Cemetery, a historic African American burial ground that were dug up and relocated as shoreline erosion control on the Potomac River in 1960 to make way for commercial development.
 - **Oct 2020:** Initiated a partnership with the Small Farm Outreach Program at Virginia State University in an effort to better inform farmers of color of the programs and services available through DCR and the 47 Soil and Water Conservation Districts around the Commonwealth
 - **Sept 2020:** Collaborated with fire partners from Dept. of Forestry, The Nature Conservancy, and US Fish and Wildlife Service to explore the potential of creating a program to provide training, certification, experience and job opportunities in wildland fire for underserved populations. We are currently exploring how this program would fit at HBCUs in Virginia, noting that there is a similar effort that has been successful in North Carolina
 - **Aug 2020:** DCR VA State Parks AmeriCorps Coordinator attended webinar to hear from Joshua Holt, the Director of Teen Works & CEO of The Corps Network, a membership organization that supports service and conservations corps through advocacy, guidance, and access to opportunities. Topic: How to build partnerships that provide teens with meaningful experiences and support
 - **July 2020:** Partnered with DEQ regarding an Environmental Justice Grant targeting underserved communities in Southeastern VA. List of Project Partners: Virginia Office of the Attorney General (state government), Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (state government), Virginia, Interfaith Power and Light (EJ advocacy), Virginia State Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (EJ advocacy), Virginia Department of Health (state government), Science Museum of Virginia (science education institution)

EQUITY REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

- Nov 2020: Submitted letter of intent to Robert Wood's Foundation; aimed at researching whether Virginia's personnel policies can influence the state's ability to advance racial equity and justice through agency equity reviews and analyzing the intersection of equal opportunity policies, agency culture, and equity.
 - Engaged in a partnership consulting relationship with the VT School of Public and International Affairs (SPIA). DCR engaged SPIA for research, consultation, and direction in the development of a program equity evaluation tool to assess DCR's programmatic and service equity. DCR understands that the usefulness of a tool requires that people have the understanding, the training, and the sensitivities to accurately assess diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in order for full implementation of the tool. SPIA faculty will develop research and data-informed training curriculum to ensure sustainability and maximize utility of the equity review process by engaging employees in training to explain, use, and analyze results of the equity assessment tool.
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